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Sixteenth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

I. Background

1. The current report is the sixteenth semi-annual report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It reviews and assesses the process of the implementation of the resolution since my last report issued on 20 April 2012 (S/2012/244). It notes the absence of further tangible progress on key provisions of the resolution, and highlights concerns that continue to threaten Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, despite President Michel Sleiman's and Prime Minister Najib Mikati's careful policy of disassociating Lebanon from the Syrian crisis, and the resumption of the National Dialogue.

2. Over the last six months, the ongoing turmoil in the Syrian Arab Republic has further affected Lebanon, increasing political polarization and concern that the unrest in Syria could have negative consequences for Lebanon's stability. Incidents of cross-border fire, incursions, abductions and arms trafficking across the Lebanese-Syrian border have increased significantly. Syrian army violations of Lebanon's sovereignty have intensified, including intermittent shelling from Syria. These incidents have caused death, injury and damage to property in Lebanon.

3. The crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has posed new challenges to the security and the authority of the Lebanese State. In particular, domestic tensions have significantly increased across Lebanon between groups with diverging positions on the Syrian crisis, leading to armed clashes that have resulted in death and injury in the north of the country. In addition, Lebanon has continued to host a large number of Syrian nationals fleeing the violence in their country, as well as Palestinian refugees who were based in Syria.

4. On 5 July, an opposition Member of Parliament, Boutros Harb, was targeted in an assassination attempt in the building housing his office in Beirut. This was the second incident of this type this year after the assassination attempt on Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea near his residence in March.

5. On 9 August, Lebanese authorities arrested former Minister and Member of Parliament Michel Samaha for involvement in smuggling explosives from the Syrian Arab Republic, allegedly as part of a plot against targets in Lebanon, with the aim of provoking confessional strife. Syrian General Ali Mamlouk and Colonel Ali

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Adnan have also been identified as suspects in the same case with plotting to assassinate political and religious figures in the country and planning terrorist attacks by a Lebanese military court. More recently, the Military Court has been examining evidence that the Adviser to the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Buthaina Shaaban, was also allegedly involved in the case. Samaha's public alignment with positions of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has deepened concerns about attempts to draw Lebanon into regional events.

6. On 16 September, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Ali Jafari, stated publicly that members of the elite Quds Force were present in Lebanon as advisers. The President and the Government of Lebanon requested immediate clarification from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Shortly thereafter, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran denied the statement attributed to the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

7. On 11 October, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah confirmed publicly that his party had launched an Iranian-built drone, assembled in Lebanon, towards Israel for a reconnaissance mission. The Israeli Air Force shot it down on 6 October over southern Israel.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

8. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have been implemented as highlighted in my previous reports. Presidential and parliamentary elections took place in a free and fair manner. The Syrian Arab Republic withdrew its troops and military assets from Lebanon in April 2005. Lebanon and Syria established full diplomatic relations in 2009.

9. President Sleiman and Prime Minister Mikati continued to affirm during the reporting period Lebanon's respect for all United Nations resolutions. However, the escalating crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has further stalled processes that are fundamental for the implementation of this and other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon. It has also increased political tensions in the country.

10. The delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, which was strongly encouraged by the Security Council in its resolution 1680 (2006), has not yet taken place. Moreover, the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias continue to pose a threat to the stability of the country and the region, and highlight the need for the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces to increase their efforts to reach a full monopoly on the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout Lebanon.

11. My representatives and I have remained in regular contact with all parties in Lebanon over the reporting period, as well as with relevant regional and international leaders. I met Prime Minister Mikati in New York on 27 September. On this occasion, I reiterated the United Nations unwavering commitment to the stability and security of Lebanon in these difficult times for the country, as well as the need for Lebanon to continue its efforts to meet all of its international obligations, in particular those under relevant Security Council resolutions.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

12. Resolution 1559 (2004) aims at strengthening the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in line with the Taif Agreement of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon committed themselves. This objective has remained the highest priority of my efforts to facilitate the implementation of all resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

13. In its resolution 1680 (2006), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. I have continued to call upon Syria and Lebanon to achieve the full delineation of their common border. However, given the unrest in neighbouring Syria, no tangible steps were taken by either side during the period under review towards the delineation and demarcation of the border between Lebanon and Syria.

14. I recall that the delineation and demarcation of Lebanon's boundaries remain an essential element to guarantee the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is also a critical step to allow for proper border control. The complex security situation along the Syrian-Lebanese border in the current circumstances further underlines the importance of demarcating the border. As Syrian officials now complain of arms smuggling from Lebanon to Syrian opposition forces, it adds to the urgency of border demarcation. While acknowledging the bilateral nature of border delineation, progress on this matter remains an obligation of the two countries under Security Council resolution 1680 (2006), derived from 1559 (2004).

15. During the reporting period, there was a significant increase in shelling incidents and incursions by the Syrian Government forces, some of which targeted Lebanese villages along the border. From 1 January until 30 June 2012, 7 shelling incidents were reported in northern Lebanon, against 31 incidents for the month of July alone. These incidents have led to Lebanese casualties and prompted the Government of Lebanon, through a Cabinet decision reached on 9 July 2012, to increase the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces along the northern border. On 17 September, for the first time, missiles fired by Syrian warplanes hit a remote area on the edge of the Lebanese town of Arsal. On 21 September, the Lebanese Armed Forces reported that there had been incidents in the Eastern Bekaa region involving its personnel and armed elements of the Syrian opposition. No casualties were reported. The Lebanese Armed Forces stated that it would not allow any party to use Lebanese territory for the purpose of drawing Lebanon into the developments of neighbouring countries, and it renewed its determination to defend Lebanese territory and confront any violation, regardless of the responsible party behind it.

16. Until mid-July, Lebanon complained about these Syrian violations and incidents discreetly through military channels only. On 23 July, at the request of President Sleiman, Lebanon protested these violations at the political level for the first time through diplomatic channels. On 4 September, Prime Minister Mikati instructed Lebanon's Ambassador to the Syrian Arab Republic to protest the Syrian army shelling along and across the border. The Prime Minister of Lebanon expressed to me his determination to protect Lebanon from these violations of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity. In recent public comments, President Sleiman urged both the

Syrian authorities and the opposition to avoid crossing into Lebanese territory and shelling border areas. I strongly deplored these gross violations of Lebanon's territorial integrity and the loss of life. I called on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with Security Council resolutions. The Security Council also expressed grave concern over those repeated incidents in a press statement on 18 July. The situation on Lebanon's northern border remains tense, underscoring the need for continued vigilance internationally against the risk of a further spillover of the crisis in Syria.

17. The continued occupation by the Israel Defense Forces of the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line stands in violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). My representatives and I have continued to engage closely with both parties with a view to facilitating the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the area in implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

18. There has been no progress either in relation to the issue of the Shab`a Farms area. Neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has responded with regard to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), issued on 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641).

19. The Israel Defense Forces continued to make almost daily intrusions into Lebanese airspace, mainly by unmanned aerial vehicles, but also fighter jets. These overflights are violations of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). The Government of Lebanon has repeatedly protested these violations. I have deplored them and demanded that they cease immediately. Israeli authorities claim in turn that these overflights are carried out for security reasons.

B. Extension of Lebanese Government control over all Lebanese territory

20. The Government of Lebanon has reiterated to the United Nations its intention to extend State authority over all Lebanese territory, as called for by the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). The Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces have played a crucial role in implementing this commitment, under difficult security circumstances. However, the ability of the Lebanese State to fully exercise its authority over all of its territory remains curtailed and challenged, underlining the need for continued international support to the Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

21. Over the last six months, Lebanon has continued to face significant challenges to its security and stability domestically, linked directly or indirectly to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. A series of security incidents have highlighted once again the threats to the security of Lebanon posed by armed groups outside of the control of the State and by the proliferation of weapons.

22. Since May this year, there has been intermittent heavy fighting in Tripoli between the predominantly Sunni and Alawite neighbourhoods of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jebel Mohsen, which continued for several days on each occasion. The fighting has involved the use of heavy weapons and has led to a large number of deaths and injuries. The deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces in the area has contained the fighting, but the situation remains fragile. The

Lebanese Armed Forces also confiscated guns, ammunition and heavy weapons in the area.

23. On 15 August, dozens of Syrian nationals and a Turkish national were abducted by a Shia clan in Beirut in retaliation for the abduction earlier that week of one of their family members in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Government of Lebanon condemned those developments, called for restraint on all sides and established a security committee to follow up on those events. I strongly condemned kidnappings and retaliatory hostage-taking in Syria and Lebanon and called for the immediate release of all those detained without due process and in violation of their human rights. On 11 September, the Lebanese Armed Forces freed the last hostage kidnapped on 15 August, while four Syrians and a Turkish national had been freed in an operation in south Beirut on 8 September in which Government forces made several arrests in connection with the kidnapping. Following the release on 25 September of one of the Lebanese pilgrims kidnapped in Syria in May, nine remain in captivity.

24. Lebanese public opinion is deeply divided as to events in the Syrian Arab Republic. There have been security incidents, demonstrations and protests in Beirut, Sidon and in the region of Akkar in particular — some violent, others peaceful — which have reflected confessional tensions or challenged the authority of the State, for instance through the blocking of major highways, burning tyres and shooting in the air.

25. Taken together, the incidents listed above are indicative of the ongoing security threats in the country and the proliferation of weapons held by non-State actors. They are also a reminder that the Lebanese authorities should do more to impose law and order throughout the country. On 20 September, the Cabinet approved a broad, medium-term plan budgeted at $1.6 billion to increase the capacity and the capability of the Lebanese Armed Forces, including for border security management. The Lebanese authorities have indicated that they will be looking for assistance from the United Nations and donor support for this plan as part of the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). I welcomed the decision of the Government.

26. Over the reporting period, the situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has remained cautiously calm and stable. As the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed some troops from south of the Litani Sector to reinforce its efforts along the north-eastern border, UNIFIL increased operational activities in its area. The Lebanese Armed Forces assured the United Nations that this was a temporary measure and that the troops would be sent back to the south as soon as the situation allowed. On some occasions, UNIFIL faced some restrictions to its freedom of movement in its area of operations, which in some instances endangered the safety and security of the United Nations peacekeepers. The freedom of movement of UNIFIL and the security and safety of its personnel are integral to the effective execution of the mandate of the Force. I condemned such restrictions on the freedom of movement of United Nations peacekeepers. The primary responsibility for ensuring the security and the freedom of movement of UNIFIL in its area of operations lies with the Government of Lebanon. I will report to the Security Council in more detail on these issues in my upcoming report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

27. There are continuing reports of shootings and explosions in and around paramilitary infrastructures in the eastern Bekaa Valley belonging to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) and Fatah al-Intifadah, which are headquartered in Damascus, confirming that paramilitary training occurs in these facilities. The permanent presence of such bases along the Syrian-Lebanese border adds to the general porosity of parts of the land border and poses a challenge for the control of the border by the Lebanese security forces. It also makes the delineation of the border more difficult.

28. With regard to Lebanon's border with the Syrian Arab Republic, there continue to be reports of arms trafficking taking place in both directions. Several Member States have expressed deep concern over the illegal transfer of weapons across the land borders. The Lebanese Armed Forces had successes in recent months in interdicting arms consignments apparently bound for Syria. At the same time, President Sleiman and the Lebanese Armed Forces have been very clear in rejecting suggestions of widespread and substantial arms trafficking towards Syria. Yet, Lebanese authorities have indicated that the land border between Lebanon and Syria remains difficult to control, but that the Lebanese Armed Forces are deployed and have sought to tighten control along the border to the best of its ability by increasing the number of patrols and observation missions. I view these reports with the utmost seriousness, but the United Nations does not have the means to verify them independently. I have repeatedly expressed my concerns to the leadership of both countries about two-way arms smuggling across the Syrian-Lebanese border, which poses risks to both countries.

29. The allegations of arms trafficking across the Syrian-Lebanese border and the repeated incidents along the border that have caused death and injury to civilians emphasize the urgent need to improve the management and control of Lebanon's land borders. This is also a necessity in order to avoid armed groups and militias in Lebanon from expanding their weapons arsenal, which constitutes a threat to domestic and regional peace. Despite the commitment expressed by the Government of Lebanon to adopt a comprehensive national strategy for border management, little concrete progress has been accomplished on the matter at this stage. In the meantime, it remains an obligation under Security Council resolutions that all States take the necessary measures to prevent the transfer of arms to groups outside the control of the Government of Lebanon.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

30. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council called for the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. This key remaining provision of the resolution is yet to be implemented. It merely reflects and reaffirms a decision that all Lebanese committed themselves to in the Taif Agreement, in the aftermath of the civil war. This agreement led at the time to Lebanese militias, with the exception of Hizbullah, giving up their weapons. The agreement must be preserved and implemented by all in order to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among the Lebanese.

31. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias continue to operate in the country outside of the control of the Government in serious violation of resolution 1559 (2004).

While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside Government control, the armed component of Hizbullah is the most significant and most heavily armed Lebanese militia in the country, almost reaching the capacity of a regular army. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups poses a serious challenge to the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In addition, there are a series of Palestinian armed groups operating in the country inside and outside the refugee camps.

32. I have repeatedly expressed my deep concern to Lebanese leaders about the serious risks that the continued existence of these militias poses to the stability of the country and the region. I urged them to address this matter without further delay, as it is their obligation under Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). Nonetheless, the leadership of Hizbullah acknowledges that it maintains a substantial military arsenal separate from that of the State, claiming it serves defensive purposes against Israel. In public pronouncements, the leadership of Hizbullah stated that it has upgraded the strength of its military capabilities and will seek to continue to do so. This is in blatant defiance of resolution 1559 (2004). The Secretary-General of Hizbullah also acknowledged on 11 October that his militia had launched a drone towards Israel that was intercepted by the Israeli Air Force on 6 October. Hizbullah is also a Lebanese political party. Israeli officials have argued that, given the participation of Hizbullah in the Government of Lebanon, Israel would consider reacting to any Hizbullah attack on Israel with retaliation against the Lebanese State.

33. On 3 October at least three Hizbullah militants were killed and several other people wounded as a result of explosions at an ammunition depot in the Bekaa town of Nabi Sheet. Immediately after the explosion, Hizbullah militants cordoned off the area. That incident was a stark reminder of the risk posed by the presence of ammunition held by non-State actors, particularly in densely populated areas. Following this incident, members of the Lebanese opposition reiterated their call for the urgent need to resolve the issue of Hizbullah's weapons.

34. In recent months, there have been credible reports suggesting involvement by Hizbullah and other Lebanese political forces in support of the parties in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Member States have raised the matter with me with concern, particularly in the wake of recent reports on the killing of Hizbullah militants involved in the fighting against armed elements of the Syrian opposition. Such militant activities by Hizbullah in Syria contradict and undermine the dissociation policy of the Government of Lebanon, of which Hizbullah is a coalition member.

35. Over the reporting period, there has been yet again no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias as called for in the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). I recall that since the adoption of that resolution in 2004, with the exception of the National Dialogue of 2006, which took some preliminary decisions on this matter that were never implemented, no concrete steps have been taken to address this crucial issue, which stands at the heart of the sovereignty and the political independence of Lebanon. Nonetheless, several Lebanese groups and individuals have been speaking up against Hizbullah's maintenance of a military arsenal, which they consider is a destabilizing factor in the country and contradictory to democracy, as many Lebanese see the continued existence of such arms as an implicit threat for use

within Lebanon for political reasons, bearing in mind in particular the violent events of May 2008.

36. I have long supported the National Dialogue, a Lebanese-led political process, as the best way to address the issue of arms and achieve the ultimate goal of no weapons or armed forces in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State. This is the process that the Lebanese leaders committed to in 2008. On 11 June, President Sleiman succeeded in reconvening the National Dialogue, which had not met since November 2010. The session was attended by many of the country's leaders from across the political spectrum, representing both the March 8 and March 14 political movements. The Secretary-General of Hizbullah, one of the main stakeholders in the matters to discuss, was absent from the meeting. He had not attended any of the dialogue sessions since it reconvened in 2008. He was represented by Hizbullah parliamentary leader Mohamed Raad. Former Prime Minister Saad Hariri was also absent and represented by former Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, who also attends the National Dialogue in his own capacity. The leader of the Lebanese Forces, Samir Geagea, declined to participate. At the conclusion of the 11 June session, a declaration was issued recording the agreement of the participants on 17 points, including commitment to the promotion of calm on the security, political and media levels; avoidance of violence and recourse to arms; support for the Lebanese Armed Forces; making Lebanon neutral with respect to regional and international conflicts and the avoidance of the negative impact of regional crises, except in matters where there is an Arab or international consensus or relating to the Palestinian cause; and commitment to international resolutions.

37. Since 11 June, the National Dialogue convened three times, on 25 June, 16 August and 20 September. In the 25 June session, it was decided that President Sleiman should present his vision with regard to a national defence strategy, including the weapons issue, as a basis for the discussion. The participants reaffirmed their commitment to the joint Baabda Declaration of 11 June. They also called upon the Government to put in place mechanisms for implementing earlier decisions of the National Dialogue with regard to the Palestinians, including by addressing their social and humanitarian situation and Palestinian weapons outside the camps. On 16 August, after much uncertainty about the participation of the opposition, which insisted that the weapons of Hizbullah be discussed, the National Dialogue resumed talks and agreed to postpone discussions on national defence strategy until all members could be present; and to impose, through all legitimate means, security throughout Lebanon, including the establishment of a committee made up of members of the Dialogue to peacefully resolve the issue of kidnappings in the country.

38. At the last session on 20 September, President Sleiman submitted a short paper laying out his vision for a comprehensive national defence strategy. While the participants did not discuss the substance of the paper, they agreed in a joint statement to consider the President's vision as "a starting point for discussion aiming at concurring on a national defence strategy, addressing the issue of arms" and further asserted "the necessity to maintain the dynamics of the dialogue". The next session is set for November.

39. The deliberations within the National Dialogue, since it resumed in June, have displayed yet again highly divergent positions between the two main camps, in particular related to the weapons of Hizbullah. In the meantime, participants

expressed jointly their commitment to domestic peace and to protect the country from the potential repercussion of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.

40. With regard to the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon, the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has reiterated to me and to the Lebanese authorities its firm position that all Palestinians in Lebanon must respect the sovereignty and the political independence of Lebanon and adhere to Lebanese law and security requirements.

41. During the period under review, a series of incidents in Palestinian refugee camps have raised concern. On 17 May, the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested the driver of a vehicle suspected of carrying weaponry out of the Ain al-Hilweh camp. On 15 June, tensions increased in the Nahr al-Bared camp after the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested two young Palestinians. Residents subsequently pelted soldiers with stones who retaliated with gunfire, killing one Palestinian. In the ensuing clashes in Nahr al-Bared and Ain al-Hilweh on 18 June, two people were killed. In addition, a substantial number of camp residents and Lebanese Armed Forces personnel were injured. The incidents sparked demonstrations in other camps in Lebanon. The incidents highlighted the specific need to address access issues there while continuing to respect broader security concerns. In July, steps were taken to ease access restrictions that have applied at Nahr al-Bared since the fighting there in 2007. In addition, the Lebanese Armed Forces resumed their duties in and around the camp. Prime Minister Mikati met Palestinian representatives and appointed Khaldoun el-Sharif as the new Chairman of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee to promote Lebanese-Palestinian exchanges on the living conditions of refugees.

42. Beyond the incidents listed above, occasional security incidents and inter-factional clashes involving the use of weapons occurred in Ain al-Hilweh, causing some injuries but no fatalities. While the Lebanese authorities deem the cooperation with security authorities in the camp to be satisfactory, the threat of internal violence that could potentially spill over into surrounding areas still exists in a number of camps, as some of them continue to provide safe haven for those who seek to escape the authority of the State. With the exception of the Nahr al-Bared camp, Lebanese authorities do not maintain a permanent presence inside the camps, despite the fact that the Cairo agreement of 1969, which permitted the presence of Palestinian armed forces in the refugee camps, was annulled by the Lebanese Parliament in 1987.

43. Humanitarian conditions for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have remained dire and precarious. In this regard, Prime Minister Mikati pledged to me again the intention of the Government to do its best to improve their living conditions. The United Nations has continued to urge the Lebanese authorities to improve the conditions in which Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon, notably by facilitating their access to the official labour market through the implementation of outstanding legislation, without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement in the region and bearing in mind the detrimental effects of dismal living conditions on the wider security situation. For its part, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is proceeding steadily with work to rebuild the Nahr al-Bared camp. Reconstruction of about a quarter of the camp has been finalized and further funding is in place to complete about half of the overall

work. Further progress depends on donor support. In the meantime, displaced refugees need continuing support notably in the form of rental subsidies.

44. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps continues to challenge the ability of Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty over its territory. In spite of the decision taken in 2006 by the National Dialogue, and confirmed in recent sessions of the National Dialogue, no progress was made with regard to dismantling the military bases of PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifadah in the country. All but one of these bases are located along the Syrian-Lebanese border. Their presence continues to undermine Lebanese sovereignty and governmental authority. It also poses a challenge to the effective control of the eastern border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. I have called consistently upon the Lebanese authorities to dismantle these bases, and on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with these efforts. During the month of May, the Secretary-General of PFLP-GC, Ahmad Jibril, visited Lebanon for the first time since 2006 and met with a number of political leaders, mostly from the March 8 coalition. During the visit, Jibril asserted that his group would not give up its arms and that the disarmament of Palestinian factions outside refugee camps in Lebanon would be conceivable only once the Arab-Israeli conflict was settled and the rights of the Palestinian people assured.

III. Observations

45. During the period under review, there has been no further tangible progress yet again towards the implementation of the remaining provisions of resolution 1559 (2004). At the same time, Lebanon's stability and sovereignty have been severely challenged. The country has remained vulnerable to the impact of the Syrian conflict, polarizing opinions and increasing tension. Largely as a result of the deteriorating situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon has witnessed cross-border clashes and shelling; arms smuggling; the influx of thousands of refugees; deadly Alawite-Sunni clashes; and politically motivated assassination attempts, which have destabilized the country. I am deeply concerned by the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon. Despite internal and external pressures, President Sleiman and Prime Minister Mikati have upheld successfully a policy of dissociation from the Syrian crisis. I congratulate them on their efforts and urge them to continue to pursue this policy. I also commend them for working with all parties to preserve the security and stability of Lebanon in difficult circumstances. However, I am increasingly concerned that the increasing number of reports of activities in Syria by Hizbullah, a member of the governing coalition, could jeopardize this policy and ultimately the stability of Lebanon.

46. While I am conscious that the remaining provisions of the resolution to be implemented are the most difficult and sensitive ones, and that the situation in the region has not been conducive to further progress on the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004), I reiterate my firm conviction that it is in the best interest of Lebanon and the Lebanese to make progress towards the full implementation of the resolution for the long-term stability of the country and the region. Much work lies ahead for the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004), in particular as regards the question of weapons outside Government control.

47. I condemn the increasing number of incidents in which civilians have been killed, injured or put at risk on the Lebanese side of the border with the Syrian Arab Republic owing to actions of the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic. I am also worried by sporadic reports of incidents involving armed elements of the Syrian opposition and the Lebanese Armed Forces in the border areas. I call upon all parties, in particular the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to cease all such actions and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

48. I have repeatedly cautioned that the widespread proliferation of weapons outside the control of the State combined with the continued existence of heavily armed militias are ominous for the security of Lebanese citizens, as was sadly manifested by the serious incident on 3 October. Armed groups defying the control of the State are incompatible with the objective of strengthening the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon, and with the protection of Lebanon's unique and pluralistic system and the rights of Lebanese citizens. I condemn the possession and the use of illegal weapons wherever they occur in Lebanon, in particular in populated areas. For this reason, I appeal once again to all parties and States to immediately halt all efforts to keep, transfer and acquire weapons and build paramilitary capacities outside the authority of the State.

49. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern, particularly as it creates an atmosphere of intimidation in the country and represents a key challenge to the safety of Lebanese civilians and to the Government monopoly on the legitimate use of force. It also puts Lebanon in violation of its obligations under resolution 1559 (2004) and constitutes a threat to regional peace and stability. I urge Hizbullah not to engage in any militant activity inside or outside of Lebanon. The launch of a drone by Hizbullah towards Israel is a reckless provocation that could lead to a dangerous escalation threatening the stability of Lebanon. I call yet again upon the leadership of Hizbullah to disarm and limit its activities to that of a Lebanese political party, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). This requirement has become even more pressing as parliamentary elections are due to take place in the spring of 2013. In a democratic State, it is a fundamental anomaly that a political party maintains its own militia.

50. As Lebanon lacks an indigenous arms manufacturing capability, I call upon the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces to take all the necessary measures to prohibit Hizbullah from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacities outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004) and insofar as resolution 1747 (2006) is concerned. As Hizbullah maintains close ties with a number of regional States, in particular with the Islamic Republic of Iran, I call upon these States to encourage the transformation of the armed group into a solely political party and its disarmament, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004), in the best interest of Lebanon and regional peace and security.

51. It is my firm belief that the best way to address the disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon, particularly Hizbullah, is through a Lebanese-led cross-party political process, although this process cannot make enough headway until external actors cease their military support to Hizbullah, which in turn must be open to

discussing in good faith the issue of its arsenal. In this context, I would like to congratulate President Sleiman for reconvening the National Dialogue. I also commend Lebanese leaders from across the spectrum for their commitment to the Baabda Declaration of 11 June 2012. Given their divergent views on the Syrian crisis, it is indeed important that Lebanese leaders have committed not to permit the use of Lebanon as a buffer zone, base or channel for the passage of arms and armed personnel to the Syrian Arab Republic. This is an important achievement, which the members of the Security Council and other Member States should help the Government of Lebanon to sustain.

52. At the last session of the National Dialogue on 20 September, President Sleiman presented his vision of a national defence strategy for the country. I am glad that Lebanese leaders have now a basis on which to start serious discussions on a crucial matter for Lebanon's stability and domestic peace. It is important for this process to gain further traction. Tangible steps are needed towards disarming and disbanding militias. I urge all political leaders to transcend sectarian and individual interests and genuinely promote the future and the interests of the State. Irrespective of the particular composition of the Government, the authority of the Lebanese State can only be consolidated through progress on the issue of arms beyond its control. The end result of such a process must be that there are no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon consistent with the Taif Agreement and Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). The disarming and disbanding of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias is a necessary element to complete the consolidation of Lebanon as a sovereign and democratic State. I therefore call upon President Sleiman to ensure that the National Dialogue takes operational decisions in this regard without delay.

53. I also encourage President Sleiman and the Government of Prime Minister Mikati to finally implement decisions taken in the past by the National Dialogue, such as the dismantling of Palestinian military bases maintained by PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada outside the refugee camps. I was heartened by the renewed commitment expressed during the National Dialogue to implement this decision. These bases, most of which straddle the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, undermine Lebanese sovereignty and challenge the country's ability to manage its land borders. Mindful that these two militias maintain close regional ties, I expect the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to act constructively in this process.

54. I am deeply concerned by the situation of Palestinian refugees in the camps in Lebanon. I hope that the coming period will see more substantive Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue and progress in improving the unremittingly miserable living conditions of the refugees, including through the implementation of outstanding legislation to ease their employment. Such progress would not prejudice the eventual resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive regional peace agreement. I urge donors to support UNRWA and its vital work in providing services to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

55. I regret the absence of any progress on the border delineation and demarcation with the Syrian Arab Republic. The absence of progress on this issue has a significant impact on enhancing border control. Given that Syrian officials complain

of arms smuggling from Lebanon to Syrian opposition forces, I hope that Syrian officials share my sense of urgency about the necessity of border demarcation.

56. I stress again the importance of the early adoption of a comprehensive border management strategy by the Government of Lebanon. Doing so would enable better control of Lebanon's international borders and prevent the illegal transfers of arms in both directions. This has become even more pressing in the context of events in the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic and would help to stem potential negative repercussions.

57. I deplore Israel's continued violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. I call upon Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, and cease its overflights of Lebanese airspace, which undermine the credibility of Lebanese security services and generate anxiety among the civilian population. They also greatly increase the risk of unintended consequences in a region that is already seething with tension.

58. The recurrence of security incidents throughout Lebanon, some of which have led to death and injury, remains of serious concern. They highlight the fragility of the domestic situation and the need for Lebanese security forces to remain vigilant to prevent the illegal use of weapons in the country and impose law and order. I welcome recent statements by President Sleiman deploring the proliferation of weapons in the country and its domestic use. I also commend the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces, which have performed robustly in addressing several security challenges over the reporting period, including the arrest of former Minister Samaha. In this context, I call upon the Lebanese authorities to complete the investigation and due process in a fair and transparent way in order to bring all those implicated in this case to justice.

59. I am grateful to those Member States that are helping to equip and train the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces, and I urge the international community to continue this critically required support. This is essential to enable the Government of Lebanon to assume effectively its responsibilities under relevant Security Council resolutions. I stand ready to assist, as appropriate, efforts to move forward the initiative of the Government of Lebanon to strengthen the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

60. The multiple challenges faced by Lebanon at present, largely as a result of the Syrian crisis, are real. Given the extraordinary diversity characterizing Lebanese society, it is necessary that the spirit of cooperation and respect for the principles of coexistence and security in Lebanon prevail, as must domestic peace without intimidation by armed groups, as set out in the Taif Agreement. In this context, I am encouraged by the response of Lebanese leaders across the political spectrum to the message of Pope Benedict XVI during his visit to Lebanon in September, encouraging an atmosphere of calm and tolerance among all communities.

61. It is imperative not to let Lebanon be drawn into regional turmoil. Lebanon must not be used anymore as a battleground for actors seeking to advance their own interests at the country's expense or to destabilize the region. I believe that the country can come through this critical period safely if its leaders show a measure of unity and responsibility. This will also require that the international community give

priority to protecting Lebanon from harm at this difficult time. In addition, this should not detract from the full implementation of this and all other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon, which remain the best way to ensure Lebanon's long-term prosperity and stability as a democratic State.

62. I remain firmly committed to the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) for the sake of peace and security during a particularly difficult and challenging time in Lebanon. I, therefore, call on all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). I will continue my efforts towards the full implementation of these and all other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.